

Media, PA— Congressman Joe Sestak (PA-07) has expressed his grave concern about the new spill of Trichloroethylene (TCE) at the Superior Tube chemical plant. — “Despite working directly with the EPA, other federal and state agencies over the past four months to correct the operational problems at Superior Tube which led to a previous spill in July 2007, it is very apparent that Superior Tube is not capable of implementing safe methods of using TCE and poses serious health and safety risks to Collegeville-area residents.” said Congressman Sestak.

While Congressman Sestak expressed relief there was no release of toxic TCE into the air outside of the building, the fact the spill had occurred at all indicates that plant managers have failed to install the necessary safeguards and training protocols to ensure the safety of both plant workers and the surrounding community.

“Over the years the residents of the Collegeville area have been exposed to hazardous materials all too frequently,” Congressman Sestak said. “We cannot wait until another spill occurs, when local residents are sickened and pregnant women fear that the health of their unborn children has been compromised before we take action.”

The Congressman also reiterated his earlier demands that the EPA disallow the exemption that enabled Superior Tube to bypass stringent new standards regarding the emission of carcinogenic chemicals, including TCE.

During an EPA Hearing in August 2007, following the July 10 accident which allowed 2,400 pounds of toxic TCE gas to escape into the air from the Superior Tube plant, Congressman Sestak made remarks on the TCE narrow tube exemption:

“Why are some industries required to meet such stringent -- and appropriate -- emission standards while other industries, including narrow tube manufacturing, are not? During a conference call with the EPA, I was told that during consideration of the new regulations, they strongly felt that a cost benefit analysis validated their decision to exempt certain industries from the new regulations. The cost benefit of certain industries and the long-and-short term health of the residents in Collegeville are not mutually exclusive. Putting the industry before the individual should not be tolerated,” said Congressman Sestak. “We need accountability at the Federal level to ensure this does not happen again. Superior Tube has said it plans to reduce emissions by 30% this year – but this is not enough. The EPA was established in 1970 and charged with protecting human health and safeguarding the natural environment; therefore, I am calling on the EPA to include the three exempt industries in the April 17 regulation and show environmental stewardship for which it was established.”

When Congressman Sestak spoke directly to EPA officials and participated in a conference call in May 2007 with the Assistant Administrator for Air and Radiation, the EPA Air Quality Division, and the Region III Congressional Liaison on the April 17 regulation, he specifically commented that the risk assessment done by EPA was not available and requested a copy of it. Following this, he sent a letter to EPA Administrator Stephen Johnson expressing his concern that the EPA decision did not to take action on TCE air emissions, and he asked that the EPA change

its approach in the regulation of the toxic pollutant and revisit the exemption for narrow tube manufacturers, and has been in constant contact with the EPA on a regular basis since then.

In September 2007, the EPA finally announced they would reconsider the exemption of Superior Tube and the Accellent chemical plant in western Montgomery County from the new federal standards. Superior Tube and Accellent together emit 69 tons of TCE each year and are among the top emitters in the country.

Down in Washington DC, Congressman Sestak has also spoken with other Congressional members--including Rep. Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) and Rep. Hilda Solis (D-CA)--on introducing legislation to ensure greater accountability to TCE gas emissions at the federal level. The legislation is presently under draft.

TCE is used primarily as a solvent to remove grease from metal parts, and it is also an ingredient in adhesives, paint removers, typewriter correction fluids, and spot removers. Breathing large amounts of TCE have been shown to cause impaired heart function, unconsciousness and death. Even small amounts have been shown to be harmful, causing headaches, lung irritation, dizziness, poor coordination, and difficulty concentrating. Prolonged exposure to TCE can lead to nerve, kidney and liver damage. If TCE gets into the water supply, it can lead to these maladies as well as impaired fetal development in pregnant women and impaired immune system function.

Born and raised in Delaware County, former 3-star Admiral Joe Sestak served in the Navy for 31 years and now serves as the Representative from the 7th District of Pennsylvania. He led a series of operational commands at sea, including Commander of an aircraft carrier battle group of 30 U.S. and allied ships with over 15,000 sailors and 100 aircraft that conducted operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. After 9/11, Joe was the first Director of "Deep Blue," the Navy's anti-terrorism unit that established strategic and operations policies for the "Global War on Terrorism." He served as President Clinton's Director for Defense Policy at the National Security Council in the White House, and holds a Ph.D. in Political Economy and Government from Harvard University. According to the office of the House Historian, Joe is the highest-ranking former military officer ever elected to the Congress.